WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY - Founded December 17, 1857 MARCH 1982

WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

GIFT REMINDS THAT ANN ARBOR ONCE 35 MM CAMERA CAPITAL, HOME OF ARBORPHONE, KADETTE RADIOS

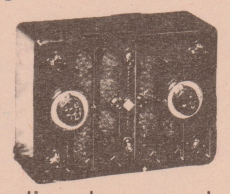
A gift of Ann Arborite Calvin Foster recalls the days when Ann Arbor was the 35 mm "candid" camera capital and the home of Arborphone and Kadette Radios.

Foster, a longtime employee of Argus Cameras has given to WCHS a collection of printed materials about the former local company that developed the once ubiquitous Argus C-3 camera, the first popular priced American 35 mm camera.

The company was started in August 1931 as International Radio Corporation on Fourth Street near William in a former furniture factory by Charles A. Verschoor and others.

Verschoor had previously headed a radio manufacturing operation at a plant on Wildt near Summit and the Ann Arbor Railroad Track which was destroyed in a spectacular fire January 5, 1931. Foster remembers watching the fire which is described in a clipping in his collection.

The floor model Arborphone Radio was produced there by 1928. After the move to Fourth Street and formation of the new company, they produced the first AC-DC table model called the Kadette in 1932. The next year they came out with the first pocket radio, the Kadette Junior, 2½ by 4½ by 6 inches high weighing two pounds.



But radio sales were slow from April through August, Foster said, and the company looked for another product to keep employees working.

It was cameras. Verschoor had noted the popularity of the German Leica 35 mm camera on travels in Europe and set out to produce a $10 35 mm camera which he was told couldn't be done. He did it. They came out with the C-3 in 1936. The camera business succeeded so well, the company name was changed to that of the camera, Argus, and they discontinued radios in 1939.

During World War II they made military radio and electronic equipment and expanded the optical division to mass produce telescopes and binoculars for the military. In 1954 they employed 1200 persons.

Around 1960 the company was sold to Sylvania Electric Products. In 1963 the three Fourth Street Buildings were sold to the University of Michigan and a nearby parking lot donated to the U-M.

Foster, born and brought up in Ann Arbor, graduated from Ann Arbor High School in 1932 and went to work for the company about two years later. He did "about every job in the plant" ending up as assistant traffic manager. He started at the Ann Arbor Post Office in 1964 from which he is now retired.

1981 CONTEST WINNERS: WILL YOU JOIN US?

Attention, all those who won WCHS's "What Is It" contest last year. We appreciated your interest in the contest and have been glad to send you *The Impressions* with news of Society activities.

Now the year is up and we'd like to have you as a regular member. To sign up just send $8 for individual membership or $15 per couple to Ethelyn Morton, corresponding secretary, 2708 Brockman Boulevard, Ann Arbor, MI 48104. Senior citizen dues are $6 per person, student dues, $2, and sustaining memberships, $50 per year.

FILM SHOWS OLD DETROIT WHEN 'MOTOWN SOUND' WAS CLIPPITY-CLOP-CLOP

Detroit before automobiles when Woodward Avenue was gravel and real, live horsepower traversed it will be shown at the WCHS meeting at 8 p.m. Thursday, March 25, at the Ann Arbor Salvation Army Citadel, on Arbana and West Huron.

A rare 46-minute film, "A Guest in Old Detroit", narrated by the late Edgar A. Guest, popular Detroit poet, will be shown, courtesy of Ray Spokes who believes he has the only copy of it.

The film drew on the 150,000 pictures, including tintypes, in the Clarence M. Burton Historical Collection at the Detroit Public Library.

Spokes's late wife, Elizabeth, was a daughter of Burton, who was an avid collector who amassed a large collection of books, pictures and other materials about Detroit before he died in 1932.

WCHS PLANS WHAT-IS-IT CONTEST AT HOME SHOW APRIL 2--4, HELP NEEDED

Bradley Taylor, WCHS treasurer, will sort through the WCHS collection for some puzzling items for the "What Is It?" contest to be held at the annual Home and Leisure Living Show Friday-Sunday, April 2--4, in the U-M Track and Tennis Building.

The game proved popular and contestants savvy last year. Winners received a year's membership, including *The Impressions.* The prize will be the same this year.

The Society has been donated a free booth by show promoter John Danovich. If you are willing to help staff the booth please call Taylor at 482--5377 evenings. Show hours will be 4--10 p.m. Friday, 10--10 Saturday and 10--6 Sunday.

Ypsilanti

PHOTOGRAPHER ADVISES:

GET A CORNER ON YOUR PHOTOS FOR POSTERITY

"Since 1839 when the discovery of a practical method of photography swept the world, our knowledge of the past has been fortified to a degree unheard of before."

Sam Breck of the Historical Society of Michigan started his comments at WCHS photo night with an apt quote from a publication of the Cuhyahoga County archives in Cleveland which he happened to receive that day.

"We have images of statesmen who glare at the camera and children who shy away from its all-seeing eye," the Cuyahoga writer continued. "We have pock-marked Civil War battlefields and a horse-and-carriage traffic jam on Fifth Avenue (or Main Street or Huron Street).

"We know how a frontier village looks when it is new with raw wooden buildings and ribbons of split rail fences and we know how a housekeeper's apron falls in starched folds.

"Photographs are an assertive witness. A plate or film has a voracious appetite for details. It captures uncritically all that it faces — buildings, billboards, wagons, and unbuttoned shoes.

"Like the blind men with the elephant each individual can learn something different from a photograph and formulate his or her own sense of the past. Photographs read between the lines and imbue them with light, shade, texture and density."

One of the reasons Breck feels strongly about the importance of preserving photos through copying them at such photo nights is that all too often photographs are lost in one way or another.

Some go to the dump, literally. Others are almost meaningless because they are not identified.

"Today, we make an awful lot of slides. Slides don't have much room to write on the way black-and-white prints did. Hundreds of thousands are made daily but the identification is all in someone's mind.

Photos from Robert Southgate Collection

YPSILANTI BANJO CLUB CIRCA 1900

YPSILANTI STREET SCENE

Michigan Avenue and Huron Street, looking north on Huron. Michigan Avenue was then called Congress Street. Davis and Kishlar handled dry goods from around the turn of the century. Note elaborate fountain from which horse, man or dog could drink.

"Look here at the wonderful expressions on these faces," he said, pointing to pictures of Salvation Army members on the wall, "but who are they? What was the event?" Someone said that although the identification is not on the pictures there is one woman who knows and "we'll have to get her to put the names down."

At least one local photofinisher has been delivering slides in clear plastic envelopes. "Get rid of the plastic holders fast, they will kill your slides." He waved a sample plastic envelope and noted that even though that one was several years old, "I can open the pocket and still smell something like a disinfectant."

"The plastic has chemicals which have not fully cured and never will. When this plastic comes in contact with the emulsion on the

slide its a goner. One way you can tell if a slide is going is if it appears there is a wet spot on it."

"There are rigid plastic storage containers that are safe to use if you don't use boxes, he said.

"Recently Kodak has owned up to a subject that a lot of people have wondered about for a long time — how long will slides and other photographs last.

"Putting it in popular vernacular, Kodak said that the ideal storage for slides is at the top of a first floor closet. Why? Because there, there is generally low humidity, moderate heat and darkness.

It sometimes gets very warm in second floor or attic storage and damp in the basement, he noted.

"Kodak says that Kodachrome slides stored ideally will last 50 years and Ektachrome, 60 years, while black-and-white negatives will last 400--500 years. That's one reason I encourage people who are taking pictures for historical purposes to take some black and white, because those will last."

The popular "magnetic" type albums with a plastic overlay sheet that holds photos in place are not good either, Breck said. "The best thing is a scrapbook with old-fashioned triangular 'corners' to hold photos. You can still buy them. With those, you can take the photo out easily.

"A very soft pencil, like a carpenter's pencil, No. 1, I think, is best to identify photos with,' he said. "Don't press hard, don't use a ball point pen -- they tend to emboss through, or pens with water soluble ink.

"Don't use pens that when you take the top off there is a kind of disinfectant odor, because that will in time bleed through and show up. Write along the lower edge of a photo preferably."

Last year's WCHS photo night was "the first I have done for a group," he said, "and it took weeks to get all the pictures straightened out with the identification cards but they have been delivered to WCHS curator John Dann for deposit at Bentley Library."

This year, Breck developed a number system in which a number is photographed with each picture and stamped on the accompanying identification card.

Now photocopying is available to other historical groups as a service of HSM which has headquarters at 2117 Washtenaw Avenue, Ann Arbor.

YPSILANTI BRIDE CA. 1890
Jane Hamilton Sherwood, grandmother of Robert Southgate.

'SILENT' SOCIETY TO SHOW OJIBWAY INDIAN FILM

A highly praised 1930 film reconstructing Ojibway Indian life before the white man, "The Silent Enemy," will be one of several films shown by the Ann Arbor Silent Film Society at 3 p.m. Sunday, March 21, at the Sheraton Inn Amphitheatre.

Members, $1, and guests $2 each. Membership open to all at door or by mail to President Arthur Stephan, P.O. Box 2794, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

THE GOOD OLD DAYS?

"A few days ago as Queen Victoria was alighting from her carriage she was shot by an insane man, but escaped injury. This is the sixth attempt upon the Queen's life." *(Ann Arbor Courier,* March 10, 1882)

Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Library, U-M.

EAST SIDE YPSILANTI WALKING TOUR PLANNED

Ypsilanti has a counterpart of Ann Arbor's Old West Side Association in its Historic East Side Association, founded in 1973 to protect a "relatively undisrupted, ordinary 19th century neighborhood" east of the Huron River to Prospect Park.

The area was entered on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.

The association plans walking tours of the area May 9 and 16, the first and last days of National Historic Preservation Week. They will start at the depot at 2 p.m. and end with a tour of the district's least ordinary house, Casa Loma or the Hutchinson house.

Lynda Hummel is president; Scott Kunst, vice-president and newsletter editor; Lyn Tabor, secretary; and Vicki Buffet, treasurer.

POLISH, GERMAN RESEARCH WILL BE GSWC TOPICS

Allan Treppa, a Livonia high school teacher, will speak on "In Pursuit of Polish Genealogy" at the Genealogy Society of Washtenaw County meeting at 2:30 p.m. Sunday, March 28, at Washtenaw Community College. Nancy Krohn will talk about "Use of Census Records in Genealogical Research" at the 1 p.m. class.

Robert Lutz, program chairman, and his wife, Luella, who went to Germany last fall in pursuit of genealogy will talk at the 2:30 p.m. April 25th meeting at WCC. The 1 p.m. class speaker will be Mrs. William Potter on "Identifying and Copying Old Photographs."

LOCAL NEWS, MARCH 1882

Dexter was soon to have telephone communications with Saline and Chicago; Chelsea lit up her streets with 15 oil lamps; it cost two young men near Saline $13 for running the toll gate; a paper maker from Illinois was coming to look at the east Manchester mill site; and a new wrought iron bridge was just completed across the Huron River at Foster's Station. *(Ann Arbor Courier)*

Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Library, U-M.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORTS 1982 SLATE

At the request of the Board of Directors, Patricia Austin, agreed to nomination for president of WCHS for 1982--83.

Mrs. Austin had served as chairman of a nominating committee, with Ethelyn Morton, Bradley Taylor and Mary Blaske to seek nominees for board offices and directors.

The hard-working committee had an almost full slate except for president. Nominees are Johanna Wiese, vice-president; Alice Ziegler, recording secretary; Ethelyn Morton, corresponding secretary; and Elizabeth Dusseau, treasurer.

Director nominees are Mary Blaske to fill out a 1983 term; Frances Couch and Bradley Taylor, 1984; and Carol Freeman, Esther Warzynski and Patricia Dufek, 1985. A fourth nominee for a term expiring in 1985 has to be confirmed.

MILAN RE-ELECTS KING

Thomas J. King has been re-elected president of the Milan Historical Society, Warren Hale, vice-president, and Lorene Burger, secretary. Michele Sanford is the new treasurer.

Board members are Ken Baumann, Eva Clark, Rob Pierson and Bill Smith. Becky Pierson is program director and Billy Thornton, newsletter co-ordinator.

HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS: OF TIN PAINTING, LODGES, QUILTS, VINTAGE COOKING

Chelsea Historical Society — Will meet 7:15 p.m. Monday, April 12 in front of library to drive to home of Fran Bosel, 4095 North Delhi Road, where Mrs. Bosel, an antique collector, rug weaver and tin painter will talk about these activities.

Dexter Historical Society — Meets 8 p.m. first Thursday at museum, 3443 Inverness.

Manchester Historical Society — 8 p.m. Monday, April 19 at the blacksmith shop, 324 E. Main Street, "Manchester Clubs and Lodges, Past and Present." Linda Ebersole is chairman of the program. Representatives of the groups are to give brief resumes.

Milan Historical Society — 1--5 p.m. Sunday, April 25, open house at Hack House, 775 County Street. Arleigh Squires collection of antiques will be on display.

Terri King, 439--3100, is collecting old family recipes for a cookbook and would welcome recipes from readers.

Northfield Township Historical Society — Board meeting, 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 23, at Webster Church. Society members welcome.

NTHS plans to have its membership meetings in summer and fall months to encourage attendance by older members.

Saline Historical Society — The Meredith Bixby marionette program was rescheduled to 3 p.m. Sunday, March 28, at the former Saline Depot, Bixby's headquarters.

Webster Historical Society — 7:30 p.m. Monday, April 5, at Webster Community House. Mrs. Gloria Brigham will display and talk about antique quilts and quilt-making today. Members of the society plan to make a quilt for the Webster Fall Festival planned September 18--19.

Ypsilanti Historical Society — Multi-talented John Kirkendall, Ypsilanti attorney who used to twirl the baton with the U-M Marching Band and teaches classes at Complete Cuisine will concentrate on tortes not torts at 3 p.m. Sunday, March 21, at the museum. His topic will be "Examples and Samples of Cooking in America's Restored Villages." Guests are invited to sample the goodies.

NO MEETING IN APRIL, SEE YOU ON MAY 27

WCHS will take a spring break in April — no meeting is planned. The next meeting at 8 p.m. Thursday, May 27, will feature free appraisal of antiques — anything you can carry in — by Iver Schmidt and Don Johnson at the Salvation Army Citadel A brief annual meeting is also planned that night with election of officers.

The next issue of *The Impressions* will be published in May.

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WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING

8 p.m. THURSDAY MARCH 25, 1982

SALVATION ARMY CITADEL

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